

**OLD BIRKONIAN SOCIETY**  
**113<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting in the School Library, First Floor**  
**7 September 2019 at 12.30pm**

**Present: Chairman, President, Hon Secretary, Headmaster, Carol Keegan and 20 members**

1. President's Welcome
  - a. The President, Mike Burrell (MB), welcomed everyone to the 113<sup>th</sup> Old Birkonian Society (OBS) AGM and acknowledged the work of the Council over the past 12 months.
2. Apologies for Absence
  - a. John Clark, Martin Brown, Andrew Cross together with OBS Council members Josh Stirrett and Trevor Matthew-Jones.
3. Minutes of AGM held on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2018
  - a. Approved as an accurate account by Brian Boumphrey, seconded by William Nute.
4. Matters Arising - Proposed name change
  - a. The Chairman, Will Roberts (WR) provided a summary of the decision not to change the OBS, notwithstanding a majority of votes received being in favour of the change, further to his letter sent to all members by Carol Keegan earlier in the year. The strength of feeling against the change was greater than the strength of endorsement for the change. The Council concluded that there are other ways to increase engagement from younger generations than the name change.
  - b. Comments or queries about the decision were sought from attending members, none were received. MB produced a newspaper article he had found from the 1960s titled "Who can be called a Birkonian". The article advises that the title "Old Birkonian" is the exclusive property of Birkenhead School and was coined by JP Hargreaves, former Chairman of the School Governors. The article was passed to Ian Boumphrey to place in Archives.
5. Chairman's Report
  - a. WR's first year as Chairman of the Society was a positive and enjoyable experience. WR thanked Roger Ewing (RE), for all his hard work in previous years that enabled WR to inherit a solid Council. He is privileged to have such a strong Council team for support. WR also thanked MB, the Archives department and other voluntary leaders of the OBS' group activities.
  - b. The traditional social events in the diary have been well attended. The Artists Club lunches and the Athenaeum Christmas lunch maintained their popularity. The London dinner was very well received, held in the glorious

surroundings of the Globe Theatre with views over the Thames to St Paul's Cathedral.

- c. The OBS hosted its first networking drinks events. One in London in early May which had a good turnout despite the date coinciding with the first leg of the Barcelona versus Liverpool Champions League semi-final. Around twenty five OBs and partners attended to enjoy some drinks on the Thames. The drinks event in Liverpool was also well supported in late May.
- d. Also of note was the Tanners Wine Tasting evening in June which was a huge success, while a reunion took place last month for the 1994 leavers.
- e. The Council has continued to liaise with the School regarding the use of the Charity funds and the Council is confident the OBS will soon be assisting again with scholarships in future academic years. As the new font in the Chapel demonstrates, the Council will also consider capital projects to help support the School's activities.
- f. Looking to the future, WR is very excited about the plans for new events and structures that the Council is looking to implement in conjunction with the School for the benefit of current pupils and Old Birkonians. The Council has identified three key "pillars" to provide firm foundations for the Society and appeal to all members: Social, Careers and Networking.
- g. The social side of the OBS continues to thrive and the other two pillars can be developed further. The recent careers conferences held by the School demonstrate the range of industries and sectors that members of the Society represent. This could and should be harnessed more for the benefit of those seeking to find their path in life or considering a career change.
- h. WR would like OBs to communicate more with one another professionally for their mutual benefit. The OBS LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter accounts are more active than they have ever been, and the OBS' new website will go live on Monday 9 September 2019.
- i. The OBS will be holding further informal drinks evenings in London and Liverpool later this year. In addition, the OBS is hosting an under-25's drinks event next week on the Wirral. All of these occasions will be subsidised by the Society in one way or another as part of a drive to get all Old Birkonians involved in the organisation.
- j. WR advised the Council has brought forward the London dinner to 8 November 2019 on HMS Belfast and there will be a Liverpool Christmas dinner on 12 December at Ginos on Castle Street. There are still spaces available for both evenings, the capacity for the London dinner having been increased due to it being fully booked before it had been officially advertised.

- k. As regards the composition of the Council, WR expressed his thanks to Tom Harrison and Jim McGrath for their service over the years but who had provided their notice to stand down. In their place WR welcomed Phil Adams and John Williams subject to their approval by members later in the meeting. WR also thanked Carol Keegan and the Headmaster who have been hugely supportive. Both are working with the Council to ensure the Society benefits all OBs as well as current pupils (who will one day become members).

## 6. Treasurer's Report

- a. Andrew Maxwell (AM), Secretary, read a report prepared by Trevor Matthew-Jones (TMJ), Treasurer.
- b. Two page summaries of the accounts and charitable funds were available for those in attendance.
- c. Last year's strong financial performance has continued with a surplus for the year of just under £8,000.
- d. The costs of the OBS section of the School's annual magazine have fallen primarily due to a review with the Bursar of the method of calculation of the OBS' share of the costs.
- e. The cost of OBS weekend is itemised and consists of two items, a contribution towards the cost of the dinner held on the Saturday evening and also the post AGM lunch.
- f. OBS dinners and lunches have also increased – in 2018 the OBS contributed to the drinks bill for the London dinner which was higher than estimated. However, the amount paid was justified given the success of the event.
- g. Other than these items the accounts are very much as previous years. They have been approved by Council and signed by TMJ and WR.
- h. The accounts for the two charitable funds administered by Council do not require formal approval but as is normal OBs are kept informed of these as they are not only managed by the Council, they are also the basis of the donations made to School to support pupils.
- i. Last year, the Endowment Fund was dominated by the generosity of OB Graham Hurton. This year's accounts include a further £15,000 from his estate, making a total donation of some £140,000. Other than the legacy, the performance of the Fund and of the Prize Fund is very similar to last year, generating an excellent surplus. The only fundamental difference in each case is the adjustment to market value of the share portfolio, a loss this year similar to the surplus in 2018, due to the fact that in 2018 the stock market was at a high and this year it has fallen off those peaks.
- j. The surplus in both 2018 and 2019 has been taken to build the investment base of the Funds. Consultations with School continue regarding the establishment of scholarships, proposed as mentioned last year to be one named after Graham Hurton, together with the resurrection of the Old Birkonian War Memorial Scholarships.

- k. Whilst distributions to School have been reduced these last couple of years, once these discussions are complete distributions to School will resume.
- l. TMJ proposed the re-election of the accounts' Independent Examiners who are excellent.
- m. A query was raised as to the composition of the Debtors total of £37,840. WR checked the notes which accompanied the accounts and advised it comprised sums owing from the Endowment Fund, Prize Fund and Birkenhead School. RE advised that this figure can occur due to the time period in which the accounts are prepared compared with the dates on which the debts are settled. AM advised that, to his knowledge, pretty much all outstanding sums from the School had been paid.
- n. Robin Lucas proposed and Roger Ewing seconded the approval of the Accounts.

## 7. Election of Officers and Members of Council.

The following have been proposed and seconded: -

- Chairman  
Will Roberts
- Secretary  
Andrew Maxwell
- Treasurer  
Trevor Mathew-Jones
- Members  
Daniel Ellis  
Jennifer Taylor  
Josh Stirrett  
Kirsten Stewart
- Proposed New Members of Council  
Phil Adams (replacing Jim McGrath)  
John Williams (replacing Tom Harrison)
- President  
Michael Burrell

- a. William Nute proposed and Mike Bickerstaffe seconded their election.

## 8. Headmaster's Remarks

- a. The School's A Level results were the best on the Wirral this year.
- b. This year there has been an overall increase in numbers by 40 pupils, 20 of whom are coming from Redcourt which has had to close.
- c. 8 of the 40 are coming into Sixth Form which is very positive as this is an area that the Headmaster would like to grow.
- d. 3 of this year's School leavers have accepted places to attend Oxbridge. Although the Headmaster would like this number to increase, he stressed the importance of

the School being open to people for whom the School is the right fit for them overall and not just whether they are very strong academically.

- e. The latest edition of In Focus is ready and has expanded by 15 pages compared with last year.
- f. The School continues to offer broader opportunities for pupils. For example 50 are going to Florida in October and there has been a rugby tour of Namibia and South Africa.
- g. There has been some investment in the premises. For example, the 'roundabout' in front of Overdale has been removed and there has been an increase in capacity in Nursery.
- h. One of the key aims for this academic year is to embed the Nursery into the One School ethos.
- i. Other projects include the Eureka extension programme in Prep, the IT Strategic Plan for 2025, a Grandparents Day in the Prep and the development of a Master Plan of capital projects.
- j. The Nicholls lecture programme continues to offer a wide variety of inspiring lectures. There is also going to be a "No Limits" series focussed on the girls. This will include female speakers and girl only workshops.
- k. The Beyond the Curriculum lessons have been expanded and will now run over 8 weeks. They will include interview techniques, critical thinking and body language.
- l. The School wants to bring in more bursaries and plans to launch a plan to increase bursary contributions.
- m. The Headmaster was pleased to report there had been an increase in the number of weddings and christenings this year in the School Chapel.

## 9. President's Closing remarks

- a. MB brought the AGM to an end and invited all in attendance to lunch in the Sixth Form Centre.